Australian Bureau of Statistics

6265.0 - Underemployed Workers, Australia, Sep 2007 Quality Declaration

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 25/02/2008

MEDIA RELEASE

February 25, 2008 Embargoed 11.30 am (AEDT) 25/2008

Over half a million Australian workers want longer hours: ABS

Just over half a million Australian workers would prefer to work more hours, and are available, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

These underemployed workers account for 4.7% of the total labour force and when combined with the 4.2% of the unemployed, represented a labour force underutilisation rate for September 2007 of 8.9%.

This was down from 9.7% in 2006 and 12.6% in 2001.

The majority (91%) of the 518,300 underemployed people work part time.

Nearly twice as many women (303,300) were underemployed part-time workers compared to men (171,800). However the incidence of underemployment among part-time workers was higher for men (20%) than women (14%).

More underemployed part-time workers reported that they would be prepared to move to another part of the state (26%) than to a different state (18%) if offered a suitable job.

Over half the underemployed part-time workers were looking for more hours of work. The most common steps taken included:

- 'contacted prospective employer' (63% of those who looked);
- 'asked current employer for more work' (57% of those who looked); and
- 'looked in newspapers' (54% of those who looked).

Further details can be found in *Underemployed Workers, Australia, 2007.*

Media note: The labour force underutilisation rate is the number of unemployed and underemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the total labour force. The underemployed are people who are both available for and want to work more hours.

This page last updated 23 February 2009

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